

Evans training ground for future lab technicians

By Jeff Troth MEDDAC PAO



Patients visiting Evans Army Community Hospital's laboratory are doing much more than helping their doctor diagnose their health issue. The patient is also helping to train the Army's future laboratory technicians.

The year-long Advanced Individual Training sites for 68Ks – laboratory technicians – is split into two phases, the first six months is at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, where the students are taught the basics of lab work. For their second six months the students attend one of 21 Army military treatment facilities for Phase II and hands on training.

"Phase I was eight hours a day in a classroom, with a lot of book work. When we got here to Evans we put all the theories that they taught us into practice," said Pvt. First Class Geoffrey Rodriquez, a reservist assigned to the 349th Combat Support Hospital in Bell, Calif.

"Here we are able to apply all the schoolwork and tests we did at Fort Sam Houston in real world situations and for real patients. It helps reinforce what we learned at Phase I," said National Guardsman Spec. Courtney Frits, who is assigned to Company C (Medical), 700th Support Battalion, Midwest City, Okla.

Evans currently has nine Soldiers who are participating in the laboratory technician course.

"The reason the students are here is that in the classroom environment at Fort Sam Houston there isn't enough of a work load for all the 80-120 students in each class," said Sgt. First Class Paul Aguon, Jr., the Noncommissioned Officer in Charge of Evans' Department of Pathology.

"Here under the supervision of our technicians the students are able to actually work on patient samples."

Evans patients might see the students when they have their blood drawn at the laboratory, but most of what the Soldiers are learning is out of view of the patient. In the laboratory the Soldiers main focus is chemistry, running tests on blood and other body fluids.

"They can actually draw the blood and then bring it back here to the laboratory and run the tests requested by the doctors," said Aguon. "Then one of our permanent staff checked the results to ensure they are correct before they are sent to the doctor. "

Aguon said that Evans' licensed laboratory technicians do not just show the Soldiers what buttons to push to get the test results, but they also explain the procedures, what the results mean and why a doctor would request a particular test.

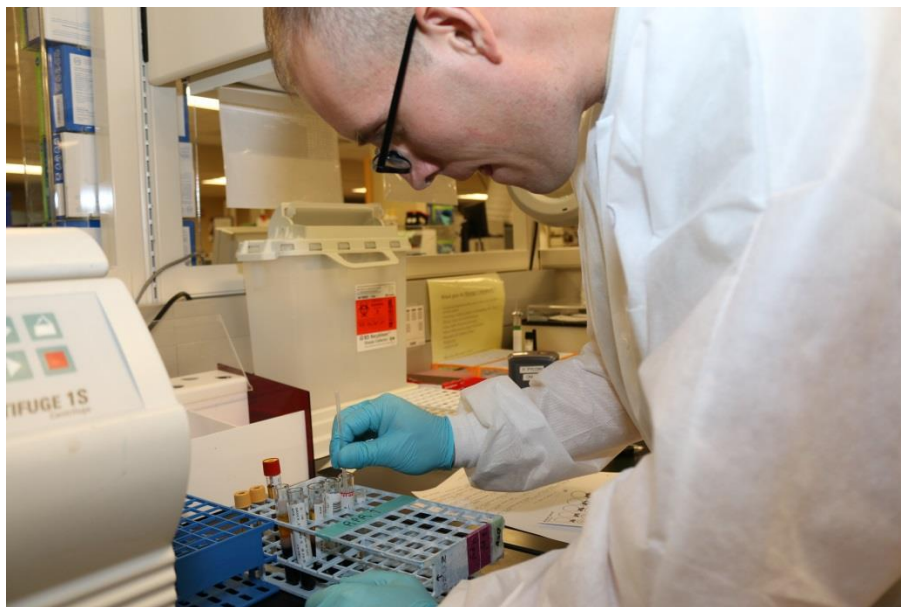
“All the trainers are very knowledgeable in their field and are willing to help you and engage you anyway they can,” said Frits. “Although this is real world, we are still in a learning environment and our trainers give us homework on a regular basis, as well as tests. I have learned a lot from the Evans staff.”

During their six months at Evans the Soldiers must also do a case study on a medical issue.

“The case study allows us to apply our knowledge on what we would do to diagnosis a specific topic,” said Rodriquez. “I did mine on a thyroid disorder. I had to list all the lab tests that I would run, list what the results would be and how these results would help in creating a diagnosis.”

The training the future laboratory technicians receive at Evans goes beyond obtaining an Army skill identifier. Since July 2013, 20 of 22 students here have also received their national pathologist certification through the American Society of College Pathologists. After completing their AIT the Soldiers only need 12 college credits to receive an Associate Degree from George Washington University.

“This course is a very rewarding experience for me,” said Rodriquez. “We are dealing with real patient lives and our lab results are what doctors are reading to determine how to treat their patient. It feels great to help people and to know you are actually contributing to the treatment of a patient.”



Spec. Samuel Howard, a reservist from Lubbock, Texas, prepares sample cards to test a beneficiary's lab samples for syphilis. . (Photo by Jeff Troth)